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INDONESIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE ATTENDS UN HUMAN RIGHTS WORKSHOP

An Amnesty International representative, Dr Geoffrey Robinson, will be in Indonesia between 25 and 29 January to attend a United Nations (UN) seminar on human rights. This is the first time Amnesty International has been officially permitted to enter Indonesia for more than 15 years. Amnesty International welcomes this occasion and hopes that the visit will provide opportunities for Dr Robinson to obtain first-hand information about the human rights situation in Indonesia and East Timor.

During his stay, Amnesty International's delegate hopes to meet government officials responsible for drafting new human rights legislation and those involved in preparation of Indonesia's new Criminal Code. The delegate also hopes to obtain information about the planned national human rights commission, and to discuss the mandate and principles of such a body with government officials. Dr Robinson will seek information about official investigations into reports of human rights violations in the Aceh region and about those reported to have "disappeared" in Aceh and East Timor.

Amnesty International regrets that the five-day visa issued by the Indonesian authorities may restrict opportunities for its delegate to gain further knowledge of human rights matters and has requested an extension of Dr Robinson's visa. The organization has since learned that the trial of East Timorese resistance leader, Xanana Gusmão, is scheduled to open in February 1993 in Dili. In light of this development, the organization today reiterated its request for a visa extension, to enable Dr Robinson to attend Xanana Gusmão's trial.

Since his capture on 20 November 1992 the treatment of Xanana Gusmão has already caused serious concern, heightening fears that his trial may fall short of international standards of fairness. Xanana Gusmão was held in incommunicado detention for 17 days before International Committee of the Red Cross delegates were permitted to see him. Available evidence suggests that he may have been physically and psychologically ill-treated during this period.

Independent lawyers from the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute (LBH) have not been permitted to visit Xanana Gusmão, and in January he wrote a letter stating that he did not wish to be represented by LBH lawyers in court. Amnesty International is concerned that this letter may have been written under duress. Relatives, who have power of attorney for Xanana Gusmão, have urged the authorities to permit LBH lawyers to visit him in detention to discuss his case in private.

Amnesty International considers that the presence of international observers at the trial of Xanana Gusmão would provide a concrete demonstration of the government's commitment to upholding international standards of fairness.